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Remembering the origins. Everyday life of Polish Jewish refugees' children in Shanghai under Japanese occupation

The children's fate as depicted in Polish-language newspapers "Echo Szanghajskie" and "Wiadomości" published in East Asia

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Introduction

In 2015 out of the 244 million people who were living outside their country of birth all over the world 31 million were children¹. These data show how significant is the problem of child migration, even if it is not raised that often as a common issue of different kinds of migration.

One type of migration is the forced one, caused by the political situation (war), or less frequently by national and/or religious issues. In the 1940s, war atrocities and fear of the Holocaust caused thousands of Polish citizens, including many children, to flee their homeland and ultimately find safety in East Asia. This kind of forced migration was a group movement. It was a consequence of the issuing of transit visas in 1940 by Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul in Lithuania, and a written guarantee from Jan Zwartendijk, a Dutch diplomat in Kaunas, that they would receive visa documents on the journey, promising free entry to the Dutch colony of Curacao.

The survival of this group of war refugees was helped by the efforts of the Polish Ambassador to Japan, Tadeusz Romer, who took care of the refugees from Poland and guaranteed them the diplomatic protection and assistance. In October 1941, the Polish Embassy in Japan was closed by the Japanese authorities², its staff as well as

¹ "Migration." *Unicef*. Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women. 01.2017. Web. 20.07.2018.

² During the World War II, Japan and Poland were members of the hostile camps. However, the friendly relations from the prewar period resulted in preserving for more than two years after the outbreak of World War II in Europe the Polish diplomatic mission in Tokyo.

the refugees still remaining in Japan, were moved to Shanghai, then under occupation by Japanese military forces. In Shanghai, the refugees, as a result of German pressure, were instructed to relocate into the designed area, called ghetto in 1943. Nonetheless, the term 'ghetto' in the case of the Jews who survived in Shanghai cannot be missed with the ghettos that were established in Central Europe by Nazi occupants. The restricted area in Shanghai was established to control foreigners, who could not leave the city after the outbreak of the Pacific War.

The aim of this article is to analyze the beginning of the 'life path' of refugee children in a completely alien environment and to verify the importance of this situation for their development of Polish-Jewish roots in later life. The most important source of information for this study is "Wiadomości" ("The Tidings")³, a Polish language⁴ newspaper published in wartime Shanghai by the refugee community⁵. Despite a plan to publish it as a separate paper, for financial reasons, it became a supplement to the "Shanghai Echo" ["Echo Szanghajskie"], a newspaper already being published by the Polish community in Shanghai from the mid-1930s. Using materials from "The Tidings" gives an accurate description of what childhood, the most significant beginning of each person's life, was like for the Polish refugee children in Shanghai under Japanese occupation.

We claim that the importance that parents attached to the education of their children, in particular to the learning of Polish, helped confirm their origins in an inherently multilingual environment, one of the other language being Yiddish. Without the Polish element, these children would be rootless, having originated somewhere in eastern Europe but without any further knowledge or understanding. To investigate these ideas, we posed the following questions: What was the situation of the Polish-Jewish children in wartime Shanghai? What were the everyday duties of refugee children? What was the attitude of the children towards education? What were the parent's activities to preserve the remembrance of the origins while staying in exile?

To answer those questions, the authors used the existing newspapers published in wartime Shanghai, archives and additional sources which they developed, such as interviews conducted by the authors. The unique character of this article devoted to the history of Jewish refugees in Shanghai lies in two aspects of the research. First of all, among the published research papers, little can be found about the situation of the children⁶. Secondly, the newspapers on which this study is based (mainly "The

3 In case of *Echo Szanghajskie* and *Wiadomości*, both names of the newspaper (supplement), Polish and English, will be used interchangeably in the text to preserve the style of expression.

4 The first issue was also published in Yiddish.

5 The author of the English translations given as the citations in this article from *Wiadomości* is Anna Kostka.

6 Among Polish researchers of the topic of Jewish refugees the following works should be referred: Barbasiewicz, Olga. "Konsul Sugihara Chiune a polscy Żydzi w Kownie w okresie 1939–1940", *Sprawy Narodo-*

Tidings”), were considered by most researchers to be non-existent having been destroyed⁷. Therefore, the analysis of their content did not appear in previous studies.

The parts of the newspaper articles cited in this paper were translated from Polish to English. Therefore, it gives a more in-depth view of the situation of the Jewish refugees, expressed in their native language. The authors also faced several limitations while conducting the research: First of all, not only was contacting the persons, (who were children during the war, and who appeared in the sources used for the analysis) hard. But also, an especially difficult part of the research was the identification of the children serving as a main characters in the sources, which was from time to time impossible, due to the different spelling of their names in Polish, Yiddish and English, as well as in different types of documents used for the papers. The authors also managed to find in archives the Polish-language documents of the Polish diplomatic missions, but once again, the data provided in different sources were not identical, probably due to wartime rush and hurry. Nonetheless, this article focuses on the selected sources, providing a comprehensive view of the situation of the Polish-Jewish children – war refugees in Shanghai during the first half of the 1940s.

Shanghai children in the statistics of the Polish diplomatic mission

On the 20th June 1942, before the evacuation of the Polish consulate from Shanghai, the diplomatic mission published the document titled *Statistics of war refugees from Poland staying in Shanghai*⁸ in which they made a register of all Polish citizens, who had escaped from Nazi-occupied Poland and who were waiting in Shanghai for evacuation. Among all the records, the accurate information concerning children was provided. The status of these refugees was dated on the 1st of June 1942. The following analysis of the statistical information is entirely based on the records cited at the beginning of this chapter.

wościowe 36 (2010), pp. 167 – 187; Guzik, Joanna. *Stosunek Japonii do kwestii żydowskiej w 1932–1945*. Kraków: WUJ, 2013; Pałasz-Rutkowska, Ewa. *Polityka Japonii wobec Polski 1918–1941*. Warszawa: Nozomi, 1998.

7 For example Irene Eber claimed that the *Shanghai Echo*, to which *The Tidings* were the supplement, is virtually unknown. See: Eber, Irene. *Voices From Shanghai*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 97. At the same time Eber did not decipher the initials under the poem, which she quotes in her publication, citing the author’s anonymity. The poem *Szpilki! Not for me* was written by Adam [Abraham] Świsłocki, the editor of *The Tidings*, which was discovered by Barbara Abraham. Moreover, David Kranzler, mentioned that *The Tidings* were burned by the editors because of the fear of being discovered by the Japanese authorities. See: Kranzler, David. *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugees in Shanghai, 1938–1945*, New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976, p. 367.

8 *Statystyka uchodźców wojennych z Polski przebywających w Szanghaju*, Archive of New Files, 800/42/0/-/528: Refugees.

In Shanghai, there were 97 children (under eighteen years old) mostly living with parents⁹. Only 5 of them were travelling alone, but all of the members of this small group almost reached the adolescence on the day of registration for statistical reasons. When analyzing the specific data, they were just before their eighteen birthday. Dawid Lew, who came to Shanghai as a yeshiva student from Warsaw, was about to turn 18 in July 1942. In the same time, Chaim Gulewski a student of the yeshiva from Kleck¹⁰ became an adult. Soon after, in September, a university student Leon Landshardt had his eighteenth birthday. He was staying in Shanghai with his elder brother Izak¹¹, who was at that time twenty years old. The next Lubavitch yeshiva student, Szymon Goldman from Otwock (Warsaw suburb) reached adolescence at the very beginning of 1942. The only female among those almost adult refugees was Maria Lifszyc (married name Klain), who was the youngest one, and was nearly seventeen years old when the statistics were prepared. She was a member of Bund, staying in Shanghai with her older brother Rubin¹², who was twenty-two years old.

Together with the persons depicted above, there were 33 recorded children aged from eleven to eighteen years old – 10 females and 23 men. The biggest number of children was aged five-ten years, consisting of 44 persons, half of them boys and half of them girls. There were 20 children up to four years old – 14 girls and 6 boys.

Statistics provided by the Polish diplomatic mission identified 60 full families with both father and mother and one father with a child. These statistics are incomplete and contain some inaccuracies. Deleted information recorded one further family. Handwritten amendments to the number of the families listed in this article, showed one child missing from the statistics (statistics referring to children are typewritten). Here the records show 90 children in full families, 5 children staying alone in Shanghai and one child with a father. Nonetheless, despite these minor incompatibilities, we can state that there were almost 100 Polish children in wartime Shanghai, being encouraged by their parents to study hard and also to learn Polish, the language of their origins. This was achieved by the organization of additional lessons in the canteen, as well as by the publication of children's creative activity. This creativity was revealed in the special issue of "The Tidings" from June 1944¹³, which will serve in this

9 This number is given in the official statistics of the Polish Consulate in Shanghai. Most of the refugees were single, that is why around 10% of the group were children.

10 Polish town of Kleck was a parish (gmina) centre in Nieśwież county (powiat) of Nowogródek Voivodeship. After World War II it became the part of the Soviet Union and now it is a town in Belarus.

11 Spelling provided in the official papers of Polish mission.

12 Rubin Lifszyc later became one of the bravest RAF pilots, who died in a plane crash on the day of Hitler's capitulation while his mission from London to Brussels. See: "Opowiem ci o Mani Kac" [I will tell you about Mania Kac], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.04.2008, Web. 23.07.2018.

13 *Wiadomości*. No. 10. 1.06.1944.

paper on depicting the children's everyday life, joys and sorrows of they stay in the exile.

Polish press in Shanghai. "Shanghai Echo" and "The Tidings" as a source to depict children's faith in exile

In 1935 Związek Młodzieży Polskiej w Chinach (The Union of Polish Youth in China) started a board newsletter, which later became first a bi-weekly publication and from 1937 a bi-weekly magazine "Echo Szanghajskie" (Shanghai Echo). It was partly financed by the Polish Consulate and the Polish Union in Shanghai in order to deliver the international and local news to the Polish speakers living in China¹⁴.

In the Autumn of 1941, approximately 900¹⁵ Polish Jewish refugees arrived in Shanghai from Japan. Among them were several intellectuals: teachers, lawyers, and journalists¹⁶.

The outbreak of war between Japan and the USA and its allies in December 1941 caused the suspension of Echo's publication¹⁷. The first issue of the "Echo" after the break was published on the 15th of September 1942. The newly appointed editorial team invited all interested parties to contribute to the "Shanghai Echo":

The Union of Poles in China and in particular its Cultural and Educational Section, on whose shoulders the work of publishing is now falling, appeals to all members of the Polish Colony with an interest in publishing their work. They should facilitate the work of the above-mentioned section by sending materials to the Editorial Office.¹⁸

Since the number of Polish Jews was relatively high after moving from Japan, the invitation was followed by the first publications of poems and articles by Jewish poets (i.e. Stefan Gołąb) and other writers. One of the most active contributors was Adam / Abraham Świsłocki, a journalist associated with the satirical magazine "Szpilki" ("The Pins")¹⁹; he was also the publisher of a fashion magazine and the owner of an advertising agency.

We can assume that Polish journalists had understood the need to create a publication aimed at communicating important information for Polish refugees who

¹⁴ "Jak powstało i rozwijało się Echo". *Echo Szanghajskie*. No. 7-8/44, pp. 2 – 3.

¹⁵ Kranzler, David. op. cit. p. 347.

¹⁶ The full list is provided in *Statystyka uchodźców wojennych...*, op.cit.

¹⁷ *Echo Szanghajskie*, No. 14. 15.09.1942, p. 1.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ *Szpilki* was Polish satirical magazine with its first issue published in December 1935. Swislocki was also a chief editor of another bi-weekly magazine – *Współczesny Pan* [Modern Man], being published in Warsaw from 1931 till 1939.

were newly arrived in Shanghai. Świsłocki, with his background and experience in publishing, was a member founder and the editor in chief of “Wiadomości” (“The Tidings”), which appeared for the first time as an independent paper on December 8, 1941, in a bilingual edition – in Polish and Yiddish. Under the title “What we strive for”, the editorial team of “Wiadomości” formulated the goals of the newspaper for Polish refugees in Shanghai. The editors emphasized the importance of the unity of all Poles regardless of their political and religious beliefs for a joint struggle for the liberation of their homeland²⁰. The editors undertook to impart information impartially and to support language and vocational education in preparation for emigration from Shanghai: this was also directed towards the children who had to be prepared for the postwar coming back to their homeland Poland. The editors claimed:

No matter how long we stay in one place or another, we should not limit ourselves to the role of passive ‘passers-by’ and unnecessary ‘guests’. We must feel like people who appreciate their high value and do not lose their own dignity in a heavy tulle. We must be ready to work productively and be spiritually and culturally motivated as long as objective conditions permit.²¹

When on 18th of February 1943 Japanese authorities officially proclaimed establishment of a “designated area” – a ghetto, the situation of the refugees became harder, what had a great influence onto their publishing activity and also the content of the newspapers. The situation of the Polish magazines was depicted in the following message from the editors to the refugees reading the newspaper.

The first attempts to create a Refugee Association in Shanghai less than 18 months, did not come about due to technical difficulties. The conditions in which Polish refugees Polish Citizens live, have changed since that time. However, the need to possess a newspaper discussing our issues remains. Tidings, presently published in a shortened format, try – despite technical and financial obstacles – to fill the void in our present life in exile. Tidings are an unofficial paper, bipartisan, a paper which counts on the efforts of the refugees not only as its readers, but as its co-workers.²²

In July 1943, “Shanghai Echo” was enlarged by launching a permanent supplement called “Wiadomości” – “The Tidings”, devoted especially to refugees’ affairs, which was led by the editor Adam Świsłocki. Meeting the specific needs of the war refugees in China the editorial board of Echo agreed to publish the supplement “The Tidings” giving readers a choice of a subscription with or without the supplement. “Wiadomości” was meant to be an open forum for all refugees and was an example of symbiotic relationships in Polish-speaking community.

²⁰ “Do czego dążymy.” *Wiadomosci*. No. 1., 8.12.1941, p. 1.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 2.

²² “Od Redakcji”, *Wiadomosci*. No. 1.07.1943., p. 1.

Since the discovery of original copies of “Wiadomości” in the private family archive of Norbert Świsłocki,²³ we gained access to the descriptions of everyday life of Polish Jewish war refugees and their children. Especially, the second page of the “Wiadomości” published in June 1944, which was edited by the refugees’ children and became, a great source of information, will be analyzed in this article in order to provide a broader knowledge about the everyday life of Polish-Jewish kids in the wartime Shanghai.

Children’s life in occupied Shanghai depicted in the supplement to the Polish newspaper “Shanghai Echo” and “The Tidings”

Apart from the memories of people who were children in wartime Shanghai, the most important source of information about everyday life is the Polish language press published in exile by Polish refugees. From the analysis of the content of the “Shanghai Echo” and “Wiadomości” we can judge that the care for the children’s future was the priority for the refugees (as well as the care for everyday survival). In each issue of “Wiadomości”, the editorial team posted information about the progress of children who started their education at schools in Shanghai. As a result of the interest of young readers of their parents’ newspaper, the editors also decided to create a special edition devoted to children’s work.

One example showing this care of the children’s future is found in the first number of “Wiadomości” published in July 1943. In a short article titled *Polish Children Study the Hardest* the importance the Polish refugees placed on the education of the next generation is strongly emphasized. This article states:

What astounds school teachers in Shanghai, is that the intellectual and intelligence level of refugee school youth. As you can see, the best pupils in the “Jewish School” are children of Polish refugees. They quickly learned the lecture’s language and receive the best scores from general subjects. They study better than Russian and German children. Polish children attending the French school “Ecole Remi” also received certificates of Excellence; they are also amongst the top students in the set very good schools, “Peter Pan” and so on.²⁴

The paper is full of pride at the achievements of Polish children in schools in Shanghai, despite their difficulties with the English or French language of instruction. With this optimistic accent, the editors finished the first issue of “Wiadomości”, as a supplement to “Shanghai Echo”.

²³ Norbert Świsłocki’s archive, accessed in New York, 2014.

²⁴ “Dzieci polskie uczą się najlepiej.” *Wiadomości*. No. 1.07.1943., p. 2.

The children were not devoid of worries resulting from the political situation and problems encountered by adult refugees.

In the article entitled *Current Pictures*,²⁵ the feelings in their lives of refugees of all ages in after resettlement in the so-called “ghetto” were reflected, where a ghetto there were restrictions on freedom of movement²⁶. In the story *The Children Are Waiting*, the author describes a situation where the child is unable to understand that “Everyone is allowed but not me! I want to go there like others.”²⁷ The school was outside the ‘district’ and the children were daily witnesses of the unfair treatment of the Jewish residents of the Shanghai “Designated Area” – it was a square mile in Hongkew district known by the refugees as the “ghetto”.

Even though this paper is devoted to Polish children – war refugees²⁸, the situation of children who came from other European countries should be emphasized, as the editors of “Wiadomości” also focused on their history. The third issue of ‘Wiadomości’ ends with a moving story about an ill, German orphan girl, whose father died in Germany and whose mother, a German refugee, died after a serious illness in Shanghai. In an article titled *Polish refugees adopt an orphan*, the story of Teodor Łabenski²⁹, and his wife Margareta is provided. They decided to take care of the child and to apply to the local authorities for formal adoption. The journalists depicted this story in the following article:

(...) During the school visit, the Łabędzki couple paid attention to the neatly dressed little girl who during the break ate a greasy potato. The superior, when asked who she is a starving child, told the tragic story of an (...). The child was looked after by the committee. Shaken by this story, Łabędzki’s married couple decided to take the unhappy girl and take care of her. In addition, formal adoption is to be carried out by the administrative and judicial authorities in China³⁰

In June 1944, the editors of “Shanghai Echo” decided to create a special issue of “The Tidings” edited by children. The date was probably chosen due to the celebrations of the Children’s Day in Poland annually on the 1st of June. This issue can provide us with a great picture of the children’s lives. The purpose of creating such a number was described in “The Tidings” published in

25 “Obrazki aktualne.” *Wiadomości*. No. 3., 09-10/1943, p. 2.

26 Refugees could not go without a pass beyond the area designated by the Japanese authorities as a ‘district’.

27 “Obrazki aktualne.” op.cit.

28 Only Polish Jews were officially the citizens of the Republic of Poland and the care was provided by the Polish authorities in exile. The other Jews who found the shelter in Shanghai were stateless.

29 A Polish journalist born in Warsaw in 1905 as given in *Polish Consular Records* [PCR] p. 122/975. The spelling of the surname differs – in the PCR is spelt ‘Łabenski’ in the *Wiadomości* – ‘Łabędzki’.

30 “Uchodźcy polscy adoptują sierotę.” *Wiadomości*. No. 3. Op.cit.

Children also wanted to have their own newspaper. They asked the Editorial Body of Tidings to establish a special Children's Corner. (...) We managed to gather quite a bit of material and found that, instead of a few lines in the newspaper, the children received a whole page (...).³¹

One of the “editors” of the children’s corner was Rysio, (Ryszard Flantz born in 1936 in Warsaw – based on the authors’ research). His father, Benjamin Flantz, was the owner of the advertising business. Like all children spending their childhood in Shanghai, he came from a multilingual family of Polish war refugees. At the age of eight, he was able to read in Russian and translate to English, read ‘Wiadomości’ with his parents in Polish and even to make his own business of publishing his paper. The silhouette of Rysio is shown in “The Tidings,” and he appears both as a brilliant boy and as a future businessman:

The youngest editor in Shanghai was Rysio [Richie]. At only 8 years old, he had been publishing for the past year a daily newspaper which had the smallest circulation in the world – a single copy. We asked Rysio [Richie] where he got his news from for his magazine. It turned out that he drew information from the Russian press. His newspaper cost 1 USD and was in the format of one notebook sheet (...).³²

Children living in the atmosphere of tomorrow’s uncertainty matured quickly. They treated even “play”, like Rysio, very seriously as a potential source of income in the future. The psychological term “play to believe” had a very different meaning in the reality in which refugee children grew up.

Norbert Świsłocki³³, the son of the Editor of “Wiadomości,” provides us with the picture of missing his homeland while publishing in the “Children Corner.” Norbert decided to embed a riddle into the children’s part of the newspaper:

Noruś [Norby] asked for a riddle. He was very glad to learn that we put one together. He asked for it to be published in the children’s supplement.

WHAT IS THIS?

It’s white in winter

In the summer, it’s blue

It looks like an “S”

Begins with “W”.

Everyone can easily guess that it is the Wisła [the Vistula river]. In winter it appears white (because it is covered with a white ice sheet), in the summer, blue (azure waters) winding like an “S” (take note what sort of curve the Vistula creates on the map: it flows out of the southern mountains, creates a bend in the form of the letter “S” and has its mouth into the Baltic Sea), in

³¹ “Dzieci uchodźców robią gazetę.” *Wiadomości*. No. 10., 01.06.1944. p. 2.

³² “Najmłodszy redaktor.” *Ibidem*.

³³ Born in Warsaw on January 10, 1936 was eight years old at the time of the publication of “Children Corner”.

Polish, it begins with “W” (Wisła). Norus [Norby] translated the riddle into English and gave it to his teacher and colleagues to solve at school. (...) ³⁴

It is difficult to think that he could have memories of his home town Warsaw and of the Vistula river, which was depicted in his article published in Shanghai because as a child he had escaped with his mother at the age of three from the Nazi-occupied Polish capital. His choice of making his riddle was probably the result of an education he was receiving from his parents’ nostalgic memories of their lost home. From the results recorded in his school record, we learn that he was an outstanding and conscientious pupil ³⁵.

Education was a vivid topic not only in the parents’ attitude towards their children’s future but also in memories of the people who were kids during their stay in Shanghai. The interview which was taken in November 2015 with Norbert Świsłocki, the author of the abovementioned riddle, can be an example of the vitality of memories. His recollections depict not only the eager of studying hard by the refugees’ children but also the great hardship of facing education in a foreign country, with all the language barriers. Norbert Świsłocki recalls:

I first started going to an English speaking school In Shanghai, and it was sort of a traumatic experience, because I didn’t understand any English. (...) I was sitting in this class next to another Polish boy, also refugee, and he was supposed to tell me what the teacher was saying in English, but he didn’t know much more than I did – and I knew nothing. And so I kept talking to this boy and clearly disturbing the teacher, so he came back to me and said ‘put out your hand’ and I didn’t know what that meant. I turned to a boy next to me and said ‘co on mówi’ ³⁶ and so the boy put out his hand like this (flat on the table, palms down) and the teacher slapped him with a ruler. So then I knew what put out your hand meant (...) ³⁷.

“The Tidings” is also a testimony of the depth of emotional relationships and feelings between refugee children. During an illness of a girl called Ada, her friends prayed for her recovery and in the article wishing her “good luck. The kids reported:

Ada suffered from measles for many weeks, after which there were complications, and her situation became very serious. During the time of [major] crisis, Ada’s friends and colleagues prayed for her health. Fortunately, Ada recovered and is quickly regaining her strength. We congratulate her and wish her good luck. ³⁸

34 “Zagadka.” *Wiadomości*. No. 10. Op.cit.

35 Norbert Świsłocki’s archive, accessed in New York, 2018.

36 What is he saying? In Norbert Świsłocki’s testimony he used Polish language when referring to the events from his childhood in Shanghai, when he had contact with other Polish children.

37 The interview with Norbert Świsłocki by Olga Barbasiewicz and Barbara Abraham, Warsaw 2015. The recording in possession of the authors.

38 “Dzieci uchodźców...”, op.cit.

The author of the story titled *Delegates*³⁹ is Jankiel (Jozef) Hirszt Fiszman, known as Józek. Since he used real names of Polish refugees, it was possible to trace some of them⁴⁰ from researching the Polish Consular Records and Microfilms in the Polish Archives the Hoover Institution. It is probable that the editor translated his article from Yiddish. We can find the information that Jozef Fiszman, although relatively young in prewar Poland, has already worked in magazines devoted to children and youth. The story *Delegates*, published in our newspaper's supplement for children, is based on reliable sources and [was written] not without humour. (as translated by Adam Świsłocki). Fiszman depicted the events from the life of the following children: Ada, Dinka, Janek, Sarenka⁴¹, Rubin, and Artur⁴².

The heroes of the story are the children of refugees living in the Ghetto. The story is written in the spirit of a moral lesson, very similar to the stories published in children's magazines before the war⁴³. The choice of the Yiddish language indicates not only the bilingual character of the author but also the fact that the story was intended for Jewish children from various European countries.

Adam Świsłocki translated "The Delegates" into Polish to make Fiszman's work available to the public. We can conclude from the context of the story, that in the community of Polish refugees' families, who were coming from various economic and social strata, there had to be many conflicts. The children had to observe that in many cases the best solution to the problems was a direct conversation.

The story tells about one spring afternoon when after returning from school, the children met to play football. They forgot about everyday problems during play and were utterly absorbed in fun. The unbridled energy of youth and a small "pitch" made the ball fly into the neighbor's window. Their reaction in the attempt to regain the ball is an image of how children, observing the methods of solving everyday problems, looked at their parents and were able to adapt to the conditions of life in the ghetto. The turn of events was as follows:

(...)Suddenly the seven-year-old Sarenka steps forward and asks to speak. She has an idea. Everyone falls silent. They know that Sarenka is not one to use idle words. At home, her father is constantly talking about social matters and Sarenka often hears the word "delegation" [being thrown around]. (...)– We have to form a delegation.

39 "Delegaci." *Wiadomości*. No. 10., op.cit.

40 Children were registered under Jewish first names and often used nicknames or the Polish ones.

41 Sara Elbaum from Warsaw. Her father, Bajruch Elbaum was a journalist.

42 Artur Czyż, a school friend of Norbert Świsłocki.

43 Bar-El, Adina. "Children's Literature: Yiddish Literature." *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. 27 June 2011. Web. 28 July 2018.

- (...)When people want to do something in a committee, they send a delegation. My dad's friends always do visitations with delegations.
- (...) But who should go. Everyone agrees that Ada should go. But who should go with Ada? (...) Votes were taken. Arthur won. (...) Ada and Artur- went up to knock on the evil gentleman's door. The door opened, swallowed up the two candidates and slammed shut. (...) Ten minutes passed and still no trace of the delegates.. (...) After a longer while, the children run up to the evil window and, standing on their toes, look into the room. (...)
- The delegates are having cakes with tea!
- (...) Suddenly, the window opens, (...) and the evil gentleman throws the captive ball onto the yard.(...)
- He's a good man, a very good man. (...)44"

The children presented in this story imitated the behaviour of their parents in seeking solution to difficult situations. We can assume that adults used this procedure frequently and that became for the children a pattern of blatant play acting when faced with a new problem.

In the cited in this paper a part of a special issue of "The Tidings" titled *Younglings' Chronicle*, as, in almost every regular issue, the successes of refugee children are emphasized. Moreover, the will to study more, even though the summer season is clearly visible in June's use:

Holidays are coming. The Editors of Tidings are organizing a Polish language course for the youngest students. Which mother will offer her room three times a week – for one hour? Please submit applications/signatures to A. Swislocki.⁴⁵

The care for preparing the children to the coming back to their homeland was above the holiday break. It also resulted in the very high grades gained by children in Shanghai's schools. The editors inform in the last issue of "The Tidings" that was published in Shanghai, that "Polish children in Shanghai are doing very well at schools"⁴⁶. The anonymous author proudly emphasizes the success of Polish children in winning competitions and in taking first places in the "Jewish School" and other schools. Their advances are admirable, both in science, despite the severe material conditions, and their unfamiliarity with English (the language of instruction in the majority of schools, as it was depicted in the interview with Norbert Świsłocki).

The author considered the effect on the children's future; the quality of schools in exile did not match the level of Polish schools. We could also consider what the author saw as the future for children in after returning to Poland. The author claimed that the parents "are interested in what future our society will have for them since

44 "Delegaci." op.cit.

45 *Wiadomości*. No.10., op.cit.

46 "Czy dzieci zdały egzamin?" *Wiadomości*. No. 13. Nov/Dec 1944, p. 1.

they can hardly write in Polish and do not know the history of the country they come from.”⁴⁷ He emphasized that in the last two years a course for the youngest was successfully run, adding that it would be worth organizing language, literature and history courses for the students of the older classes.

Examining these and other examples of articles and features in the “Shanghai Echo” and its “Tidings” supplement, we can conclude that there were many difficulties encountered by young people through displacement, resettlement and an uncertain, wandering life. Apart from the more obvious effects on the fate of Polish refugees, the process of maturing children proceeded very quickly. Many of the refugee children presented a maturity above their chronological age. They adopted from their parents’ mature patterns of behavior, which included conflict resolution and the flexibility of living with people of different religions and cultures.

Their progress in school gave further proof of the importance parents attached to more fully comprehensive education, and recognition of the values of maintaining a sense of personal identity linked to culture and homeland. The children’s contributions to the “Shanghai Echo” and its supplement, suggest that their parents’ enhanced attitude to education had affected the attitudes and abilities of these young people. Their generation bore witness to the invaluable inclusion of identity and culture into a young person’s education, no matter where they are made to live their lives.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to analyze the beginning of the “life path” of Polish refugee children in Shanghai who, despite being stuck in a completely alien environment kept taking care of their future in a postwar domicile, wherever that might be. Even though the situation there changed completely, and they ultimately found their future homes in foreign countries, thereby leaving Poland forever, the importance of their stay in Shanghai for the future development of Polish Jewish roots in later life was enormous.

Using the example of articles, we can conclude that in the difficult situation of a wondering life the maturation of the children went very quickly. From their parents, they assimilated patterns of behavior, conflict resolution and ability to share life with people of different religions and cultures. Their progress in schools is proof that the importance which parents attached to comprehensive education did indeed affect the attitude of the young generation to the inestimable value of education, no matter what their destiny might be.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

Each of the stories of almost 100 children – Polish nationals at the time of their stay in Shanghai, should be worth mentioning. The children had their worries and struggles in preparation to attain better days in postwar reality.

We can definitely argue, that the vision of coming back to their homeland and securing their origins was the critical issue in the children's reality in the exile. The beginning of their lives, although shaped by the reality of wartime, became baggage of experience for their future lives.

Nonetheless, despite forgetting about their origins, this article reminds us of two issues: firstly, the children's efforts in keeping the level of Polish education, secondly, the relevance of the access to the Polish press published in wartime Shanghai. Both problems, almost forgotten in future research, give us a broad perspective and insight into the heritage of the refugees.

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Summary

In this article, we describe the experiences of Polish war refugee children, isolated in Shanghai between the years of 1941-1945. Our research has studied a wide range of archival material, including original documents relating to the transportation of Polish Jewish families to China, their settlement in Shanghai, the publication of a newspaper, and the education of displaced children to retain their original identity, preparing them for eventual return to their homeland. Combining archival and documentary research with personal interviews of survivors of the Shanghai ghetto, this article provides a testament to the lives of war refugee children in general by describing in detail the lives of interned Polish Jews.